

A STUDY ON BHUPEN HAZARIKA'S SONGS AND ITS IMPACT ON ASSAMESE SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This paper endeavours to examine the impact of Bhupen Hazarika's song among the Assamese society during different crucial times and also to find out the historical background when the songs were written. Music serves some common functions in most societies even though musical styles and forms vary from culture to culture. Music is an integral cultural component, serving as both a cohesive and perpetuating force. Music also reflects cultural values and temperaments. Society's character and quality of life greatly influence its music, but other factors, e.g. technological level, types of raw materials available for instrument construction, amount of contact with other cultures, and attitudes toward cultural change or continuity, also influence the development of a culture's music.

As a singer, Bhupen Hazarika is known for his wonderfully crisp voice and flawless diction; as a lyricist, Bhupen Da is known for poetic compositions and parables that touch on a wide range of themes---ranging from the erotic to social and political commentary; and as a composer for his use of folk music with a touch of the contemporary. He also participated, first as a child artist, and later as a director, in the nascent Assamese film industry.

This paper seeks to explain and understand the philosophy of Bhupen Hazarika's song among the Assamese society. Bhupen Hazarika's song left an impact into everyone's heart. It is heartening that the time and the voice are now part of the repertoire of unforgettable melodies that together make up the collective musical consciousness of a nation. Actually, we have always been so enamored of the Voice and the totality of the Song that sometimes we tend to forget the astonishing beauty of so many of Bhupen Hazarika's lyrics.

The paper also examines the historical background in which the Bhupen Hazarika's songs were written and composed.

KEYWORDS: Society, Culture, Community, Music, Assamese Music, Assamese Film Industry

INTRODUCTION

Society and Culture

Society is a system, composed of many parts, which we call members, and which are intelligent systems or societies themselves. Since the basic building block of societies is the intelligent system, it has all the properties of an intelligent system. It may have other properties, since it is composed of many intelligent systems. It is made up of people, groups, networks, institutions, organizations and systems. These aspects of society may include local, national and international patterns of relationships. People belong to informal and formal groups, and within and between these groups there are patterns of interactions.

The word culture itself comes from the Latin root *colere* (to inhabit, to cultivate, or to honor). In general, it refers to human activity; different definitions of culture reflect different theories for understanding, or criteria for valuing, human

activity. Anthropologists use the term to refer to the universal human capacity to classify experiences, and to encode and communicate them symbolically. They regard this capacity as a defining feature of the genus Homo. Culture, according to a widely accepted definition, is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour. Culture thus defined consists of languages, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and other related components; and the development of culture depends upon men's capacity to learn and to transmit knowledge to succeeding generations (Sen S., Advance General Studies 1995, page no-164). In a simple way, culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

Music and Culture

Music is human behavior that occurs within a cultural context. Through an enculturation process, each social order develops its institutions and artifacts for perpetuation of itself, and music's existence is one of the few things common to all cultures. Music serves some common functions in most societies even though musical styles and forms vary from culture to culture. Music is an integral cultural component, serving as both a cohesive and perpetuating force. Music also reflects cultural values and temperaments. Society's character and quality of life greatly influence its music, but other factors, e.g. technological level, types of raw materials available for instrument construction, amount of contact with other cultures, and attitudes toward cultural change or continuity, also influence the development of a culture's music.

Music as Culture exists to celebrate those parts of contemporary popular music that are not simply about returning a profit, but are about our cities, our heritage, our shared experience and ourselves as people. Music as Culture aims to provide a voice at a time when critical decisions affecting music, creativity and copyright are being made, usually from a purely commercial point of view. We live in exciting and challenging times. Digital technologies bring new challenges and opportunities to music as a commercial form. But one thing remains true throughout all of the changes and all of the debates: Music belongs to all of us. That is why it's our culture.

Assamese Music

Assamese Music is derived from the ancient folklores of the tribal communities that inhabit various corners of the state from a long time. Bihugeet is one of the oldest forms of Assamese music which is sung by people during the famous festival of Bihu. Bharigaan, bargeet, oja-pali and jhumur are some other music variations of Assam.

The tradition of music in Assam goes back to the earliest of centuries. While in other states of India music originated from the refined versions of classical songs, in Assam the music emerged from the inherent vocal melodies of the various tribes.

Modern Assamese Songs

The modern music of Assam consists of the songs that are sung very recently for the past few decades and more. This genre of music is mainly sung by the upcoming singers of Assam. By Assam Modern Music, the contemporary music of Assam. Beside the popularity of the traditional music of Assam like the ethnic music of Bihu, Bhakti music and different regional folk music, the music lovers of Assam always welcome the new trends. Among the Assam Modern Music, there are a number of singers of Assam that have made their name in the world of music. They have become famous not in India but some of them have acquired fame outside India. Singers like Bhupen Hazarika, Utpalendu Choudhury, Khagen Mahanta and Nirmalendu Choudhury have adopted the modern trends in their songs and music. The

Assamese singer Debojit Saha has earned a lot of fame in the world of music. Other singers like Jitul Sonowal and Zubeen Garg are sensational names in the world of music.

Bhupen Hazarika's Songs

As a singer, he is known for his wonderfully crisp voice and flawless diction; as a lyricist, he is known for poetic compositions and parables that touch on a wide range of themes---ranging from the erotic to social and political commentary; and as a composer for his use of folk music with a touch of the contemporary. He also participated, first as a child artist, and later as a director, in the nascent Assamese film industry. He is immensely popular, touching on reverence, in the states of Assam, West Bengal as well as in neighbouring Bangladesh. In addition to his native Assamese, Hazarika has sung in many other Indic languages, including Bengali and Hindi.

Some Songs

Aami Axomiya Noho Dukhia / Asom amar rupahi / Akaxi Ganga / Autorikshaw chalao / Bistirno Parore / Bojalije pepati / Dil Hoom Hoom Kare (from Rudaali) / Foot Godhulite/ Gajagamini (title song) /Ganga mor maa /Manuhe manuhar babe jodihe okono nabhabe /Moi eti jajabar / O bidesi bandhu durbhagia / Parashi Puwate / Sagar sangamat / Saisabate Dhemaalite / Samay O Dhire Chalo (from Rudaali) / Samoyar agragoti / Sharodi Raani Tomar Heno Naam / Shitore Semeka Raati / Chgira jugamiya dhou tuli / Mahabahu Brhamaputra / Moi Ei Matire Lora / Moi Aru Mor Cha / Natun Nagini / Natun Purish / Pratiddhani Suno Moi / Prachanda Dhumuhai Proshno Korile / Tomar Dekho Naam Potra Lekha / Kohua Bon Mor/ Kajiranga Kajiranga / Gouripuria Gabhoro Dekhilo / Kolir Krishna Buli/ Atukura Alasua Megh Bhahi Jai / Koto Jowanor Mritu Hol / Meghe Gir Gir Kore / Juye Pora Tirashir / Ami Ekekhon Naore Jatri / We are in the same boat brother / Rimjhim Rimjhim Borushune nepour bojai kat

There are many immortal songs - most of his songs are there in Dr. Dilip Kumar Dutta's book " Dr.Bhupen Hazarika Geet aru Jibon Rothor Chaneki ".

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bhupen Hazarika has been the only person in the past 40 years to propagate the better cinema movement and has integrated all the seven north-eastern states, including tribal culture, through the medium of cinema. His remarkable popularity brought him to the legislative Assembly as an Independent member between 1967 to 1972, where he was solely responsible for installing the first state owned film studio of its kind ever, in India in Guwahati, Assam. Numbers of research work has been done and published on Dr. Bhupen Hazarika. The main purpose of most of these researches is to find out the effects of his song in different section of Assamese society. From our review it was found that most of the researchers are from Assam and the rest are from different part of the country and abroad like U.S.A, U.K, Utkal University of Culture, Delhi University etc.

The book Namrata Dutta, "Bhupenda" has a definite approach to re-examine the works of Bhupen Hazarika as a musician and person. The editor has selected writers from various fields to unearth different aspects of Hazarika. Some of the contributors to the book are Taffazul Ali (Music Director and Professor) Abhijit Banerjee (Tabla maestro from Kolkata), Tarun Kalita (Sarod player), Shantanu Moitra (music director), Dr Gauranga Kumar Sarma (Management Guru), P K Dev Chaudhury (Novelist) Dr Bipul Jyoti Saikia (Scientist), Pramod Kalita (Political Commentator), Dr Mrinal Kalita (Mathematician) Utpal Datta (Film Critic and Radio producer). Abani Bora (Broadcaster) has written a poem while Angana Chaudhury has written a short story keeping Hazarika as the central character.

"Bhupenda" is an insightful collection of writing, in verses and prose, on Bhupen Hazarika's music and life by 15

writers spanning three generations. Taffazul Ali and Tarun Kalita in their pieces incisively explore the finer nuances and influences of Hazarika's music and lucidly articulate it for the readers. Abhijeet Banerjee recounts how Bhupen Hazarika emerged as a tour de force in Contemporary Bengali Music at a time when the landscape was dominated by such stalwarts as Hemanta Mukherjee, Manna Dey and others and how Bhupen Hazarika held his own even among them. It is no mean achievement that Bhupen Hazarika's music is still popular even after more than four decades since he emerged on the horizons of Modern Bengali Music.

Utpal Datta draws our attention to an often overlooked but indispensable fact, that Bhupen Hazarika was the first artist from Assam who had the passion and conviction to make music his life and livelihood, and achieve professional success and popularity on a scale hitherto unimaginable. This pioneer has paved the way for many who have found success as artists and musicians outside Assam, particularly in Mumbai. Phanindra Kumar Debchoudhury sensitively explores what Bhupen Hazarika, his creations and his sometimes controversial decisions in life, both private and public, stand for and how they are perceived or ought to be perceived by the masses.

Bipuljyoti Saikia makes a valuable contribution with his piece on Bhupen Hazarika's presence in the world wide web. Poets Nilim Kumar and Abani Bora's verses add variety to the collection so does the piece Bhupen Hazarika himself wrote, tenderly recounting the pains and loneliness of an unconventional life. The only note of dissonance is Gouranga Kumar Sarma's piece casting Bhupen Hazarika in the mould of a "brand", a word which has such direct association to the idea of rampant consumerism in a world seared by excesses of globalization. Bhupen Hazarika's creative genius appeals to all because it is rooted in the earthy, humane values which are universal. To even try to imagine him as a brand would be to reduce and deny him this universal appeal.

"Mahakash, Mahasagar Aru Bhupen Hazarika", by Hiranya Kumar Das a recent release, a book on critical analysis of music and lyrics of Bhupen Hazarika and his contribution to the world of "Mahakash, Mahasagar Aru Bhupen Hazarika", contains 23 chapters covering various aspects of multifaceted genius as a poet, writer, journalist, film maker, singer, composer and cultural ambassador of Assam to the world. A chapter on his contribution to Bengali music & cinema is a special highlight of the book. The author has beautifully presented diverse aspects of the immortal music created by the doyen of Assamese music. It took the author about ten years in collecting, compiling and designing the book.

Another important book on Bhupen Hazarika is Arup Kumar Dutta's Bhupen Hazarika : The Roving Minstrel. The contents of the book includes 1. the man. 2. The child prodigy. 3. The formative years. 4. Days of struggle. 5. Cinematic forays. 6. Accolades. 7. The people's singer. When Bhupen Hazarika sings you can hear the voices of the lonely boatman on the Brahmaputra, the women picking tea leaves and the joyous rhythms of Bihu. Singer, lyricist, composer, film-maker and journalist, Bhupen Hazarika's creative spirit has moved through myriad fields.

From the research and books already done on Dr. Bhupen Hazarika it was seen that all the researchers and the writer have tried to show how Bhupen Hazarika is not only a singer but a revolutionary of Assamese society. These books and research work mainly highlights the meaning of the songs which were composed during different times when there is need to change the mind-sets of Assamese people.

Aim of the Study

To find out the impact of Bhupen Hazarika's song among the Assamese society during different crucial times and also to find out the historical background when the songs were written.

Objectives

- To study how the songs written and composed by Bhupen Hazarika influence Assamese society.
- To examine their role in informing and educating Assamese people
- To find out the historical background in which the songs were written and composed.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part.

This research paper will follow the conceptual analysis method.

The researcher has find out many advantages of content analysis method for this research. Through this method the researcher can looks directly at communication via texts or transcripts, and hence gets at the central aspect of social interaction. It can provides valuable historical/cultural insights over time through analysis of texts. Moreover, it allows closeness to text which can alternate between specific categories and relationships and also statistically analyzes the coded form of the text. The researcher will collect text, listen to the songs and take interviews to collect the data and interpretation.

Unit of Analysis

- Patriotic Songs of Bhupen Hazarika
- Human interest songs of Bhupen Hazarika
- Love songs of Bhupen Hazarika
- Historical Songs of Bhupen Hazarika
- Revolutionary songs of Bhupen Hazarika

The researcher has chosen those units for analysis as Bhupen hazarika has written numbers of Assamese songs and all those songs were based on certain themes. Therefore the resercher divided the songs into different criteria to find out the impact of his songs in different social aspects of Assam.

Sample Size

10 selected songs of Bhupen Hazarika

Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling method is used for this study.

A purposive sample is a non-representative subset of some larger population, and is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose. In this research the researcher has a specific group in mind. Therefore the songs were first divided into different categories. These are,

- Songs based on Patriotism

- Songs based on Human interest
- Songs based on revolutionary change
- Songs based on Nature
- Songs based on history

From those categories the researcher has chosen two songs which will serve the purpose of his research. The two songs from each sample will be taken for content analysis. The songs are:

Songs Based on Patriotism

- “Axom Amar Rupahi”
- “Buku Hom Hom Kore”

Songs Based on Human Interest

- “Manuhe Manuhor Babe”
- “Sitore Semaka rati”

Songs Based on Revolutionary Change

- “Ami Asomiya Nohoun Dukhia”
- “Bistirno Parore Ankhyonkhyo Jonore”

Songs Based on Nature

- “Shillongore Gadhuli”
- “Akakhijanere Uronia Monere”

Songs Based on Love

- “Xoixobote(Shoishobot) Dhemalite”
- “Tumar premor Bhogjorati”

Data Collection

Primary Data: Primary data has been collected through in depth interviews, group discussion, interaction and telephonic conversations.

Secondary Data: Secondary data has been collected from books, audio cassettes, DVD's, journals ,magazines and internet.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The researcher has conducted in depth interviews with eminent dramatist Arun Sarmah and telephonic interview with singer Maykh hazariha on 28th and 30th October respectively. A group discussion was also conducted with the students of Tezpur University on 2nd November. After the analysis of these interactions and interviews along with analysis of books he interpreted the data.

Patriotic Songs

1) "Axom(Asom) amar rupahi.....

.....Axomi(Asomi) aai rupahi Gunoru naai xexh.

The song speaks about the natural beauty of Assam. The researcher has found that in this song Dr.Hazarika praises about the uniqueness of Assamese motherland. Here the researcher noticed that the lyrics of the songs are composed describing each and every detail of Assam .The word Axom has been given more emphasis. In this song the cultural harmony and social condition of Assam has been highlighted. The song was written in 1960 when linguistic conflict started,therefore, Linguistic problem was highlighted in the song. In one of the line Dr.Hazarika has mentioned about it. He describes that with assimilation of the different language of Assam someone can thing of a prosperous and peaceful Assam.

2) Buku ham ham kare(hom hom kore) mur aai.....

.....Buku ham ham kare mur aai.

This particular song was a part of the film "Maniram Dewan" which was released on 1963.Dr. Hazarika wrote this song in 1961.The researcher has found that during that time Assam was in serious problem of BHASA ANDOLON (Language Movement).Keeping this into view Dr. Hazarika written this song with patriotic feeling which was letter become a part of "Maniram Dewan".In this song Dr. Hazarika has shown his patriotic feeling towards Assam. Most of the time in the song Dr.Hazarika used the term son and mother. The researcher has found people remembered the song and its significance even today.

Songs Based on Human Interest

1) Manuhe manuhor babe.....

.....laj pabo kunenu kuwa?

Bhupen azarika written this song in between 1961-1962.The song is considered as the most popular song in Assam. The researcher also found that the song has been translated to almost all the Indian language as well as in English.

In English the song renders thus: If man wouldn't think for man with a little sympathy tell me who will — comrade? If we try to buy or sell humanity, Won't we be wrong — comrade? If the weak Tide across the rapids of life With your help What do you stand to lose? If man does not become man , A demon never will ,If a demon turns more human Whom shall it shame more —comrade?

The researcher has found from books that in 1964, violence had wreaked Nagaland, Mizoram and parts of Assam and curfew had been imposed to restore peace in the region. It was his song Manuhe Manuhar Babe that had struck a chord among the people and brought back normalcy to the states. The same song has now been declared as the song of the millennium by the BBC Bengali Service.

2)"Sitore Semeka Rati"

Dr. Hazarika written the song in 1966.The researcher found that in this song the entire scenario of Assam during that period of time was completely reflected.

Dr. Hazarika in this song talks about the poor, suppressed, deprived masses. He used the line like

"Bostrobhihin kunu khetiyokor

Bhangi pora pojatir tum jui akuara

Umi umi joli thoka

Raktim jen eti protap hauk ... , to describe their condition

The researcher also found that Dr. Hazarika revolt against the rulers and feudal for their autocratic nature. He also describes how the intellectual society remains silent in those contemporary issues.

It was found through an interview with Arun Sarmah that “Sitore Semeka rati” played a very vital role in giving birth of “Assam sanmilito Mukti Bahini” which later known as “ULFA”. The interviewee also informed the researcher that due to the protest soon after the song was composed the people demanded Dr. Hazarika to join politics which ultimately made him the M.L.A in the Assam legislative Assembly in 1967-72.

Songs Based on Revolutionary Change

1) Bistirno Parore.....

.....Burha luit buwa kiyo?

The researcher has found that Dr. Hazarika has used some powerful words in this song for the change in the society like “UNMADONA”, “VEER”, “PITRITTO” etc. In this song Bhupen Hazarika speaks about the cultural, political, economical, social reform of Assamese society. The researcher found from the in depth interview with some of the youths of Tezpur University that the youth gets encouragement from the song. Even it was seen that the people who live in the village know the lyrics of the Assamese version and considered the song as the regional anthem of Assam.

2) “Ami Asomiya Nahoun Dukhia”.....

.....Jai aai axom bol”

In this song Bhupen Hazarika addresses the Assamese people as “Thalua” (indigenous) and “Natun Asomiya” (new Assamese). The researcher has found that when the song was composed the entire state was confronting with the problem of identity conflict. Keeping this in mind Bhupen Hazarika in this song mentioned that-

“Thalua aru natun Asomiya, aibeli heya jasi loi

.....

Nohole Asomiya nijorei matitei, nijae bhogoniya hobo”

The researcher has also found that to encourage the Assamese people Dr. Hazarika has mentioned the name of Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala and Kalaguru Bisnu Prasad Rabha as a source of inspiration. In this song the message “unity in diversity” is also highlighted.

Song Based on Nature

1) Shillongare gadhuli.....

.....Shillongare gadhuli....

A very nice song narrating the beauty of Shillong and poet's romantic moments hand in hand. This particular song was composed by Dr. Hazarika when he was in Shillong. Shillong is one of the most beautiful cities of North East. It is one of the famous destinations of the region. It is also referred to as the "Scotland of the East" due to its striking similarity with

the Scottish highlands. The city is blessed with temperate climate all year long. It makes a perfect destination to unwind amidst simplicity and natural beauty

The researcher has found the natural beauty of Shillong has been a centre of attraction for people of Assam. But, to promote this beauty worldwide Dr. Hazarika has written the song first in Assamese, later it was translated to English. In this song Dr. Hazarika has used the words which are catchy and close to anybody's heart like "Xoaroni Xonali", "Uri phura duti mitha saratore sewali" etc.

2) Akashijanere Uronia monere.....

This song of Dr. Hazarika reminds of good old days when people used to fly and write poems about it. The researcher found that this beautiful song by Bhupen'da narrates the aerial journey from Kolatta to Tezpur, Assam. In this song Dr. Hazarika in his own words describes how he sees the gamusa like brahmaputra, the garo hills etc etc .from the blue infinite above from rendition of a poet in words of a little child who is thrilled by his first aerial journey sings it to one and all, describing all that the originating airport to his 'lokyosthaan' i.e, Tezpur.

"Posimor Pora, Bongor pora, marilu ura"

It is found that in this song Dr. Hazarika used the story telling method where he describes the entire thing which occurred during his journey from Calcutta to Tezpur.

Love Songs

1) Xoixobote(Shoishobot) Dhemalite tumaare umola monot aase.....

.....Jot xunot koiu manuhor damm olop holeu besi aase!!

Bhupen Hazarika wrote numbers of love songs. In this song Dr. Hazarika describes about a love story of a boy who fell in love with a girl in teen age period of his life. But the girl left him .He uses the word like "gusi gola", "goraaki bolila" to give the song a feeling of eternal love.

The researcher has found that the love life of Dr. Hazarika is not at all satisfactory which reflected in his composition. Moreover the songs were composed with a indigenous feeling, i.e., the way a village boy show his feeling towards his lover.

2) "Tumar Premor Bhogjorati".....

In this song Dr. Hazarika has express the feeling of a lover in a different way. Here Dr. Hazarika requested her to give him the power to rebuilt, reconstruct the society with affection, Humanity, morality and faith so that the society can make abridge of assimilation.

The researcher has found that in this particular song Dr. Hazarika becomes a follower of his lover. The girl in this song is portrayed as a symbol of hope and dream .The researcher also found that when the song was composed Dr. Hazarika was newly married. Therefore instead of sorrow and tragedy in his other love song the researcher find the importance of life in everyone's life in this song.

Summary of Findings

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's voice which has a rich, highly emotive, beautifully timbered, sonorously resonant voice that easily attracts anyone. Dr Bhupen Hazarika has always been so much a bard of contemporaneous events; he is also, unequivocally, a singer for all seasons, a poet and lyricist whose vision has always been uncompromisingly humanistic.

Bhupen Hazarika has never been a poet singing his songs in isolation of contemporary society. Intimately associated with several of the region's movements, he is a bard with a social conscience, a troubadour who mirrors society, musically, but relentlessly. In a community ridden with fractious discord, he has always been the voice of moderation, of the need for harmony among the many peoples, tribes and races who live here. But there is also anger in many of his songs of this genre, a deep and genuine anger against social injustices.

The people of Assam used his songs as weapon when there is a necessity to change or revolution within the society. "Bhasa Andolon", "Krishak Mukti Sangram", birth of "Axom Sahitya Sabha" are few examples of those revolution. Looking at the impact of his songs on Assamese society the Assamese age can be divided in to three period. Sankardeva Period or Mahapurushiya period, Jyoti Prashad period and Bhupen Hazarika period or period of social change and revolution.

He is a communicator of romance, passion, universalism and humanism. Hazarika is cherished in Dhaka as much as he is in Guwahati. His song on the war of Bangladesh's freedom, "Joi Joi Naba Jata Bangladesh" (hail the newborn Bangladesh), is a stirring marching tune which was on every Bengali's lips during those harrowing days. His songs are not limited to Assamese and Bengali, and Bhupenda's rich baritone is equally at ease with Hindi, Urdu and English.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher come to the conclusion that Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's song are now become a part and parcel of Assamese culture. The songs are not only have a respect among all class of Assamese society but also played a significance role in educating, awakening and informing them about their own identity, assimilation and harmony. In fact all of his songs are a symbol of unity, brotherhood which help in constructing the "Brihottor Asomiya Jati".

Bhupen Hazrika's voice is his weapon of social reform. The voice that age has not managed to fell or even to lay low, the voice that entire generations of true-blue Assamese boys and girls have grown up on, the voice that has had men and women across all social strata in our part of the world humming the tunes that he created, for several decades now. And yet, amazingly, in spite of the fact that Dr Bhupen Hazarika has always been so much a bard of contemporaneous events, he is also, unequivocally, a singer for all seasons, a poet and lyricist whose vision has always been uncompromisingly humanistic. It is no doubt for this reason that his music has always been relevant, no matter at what point of time the lyrics were originally penned, no matter what language they have been later translated into, no matter what culture, away from the once-tranquil, now turbulent lifestyle beside his beloved Luit (the Brahmaputra), those songs are subsequently metamorphosed into.

"Ganga", is a fine example of this universality of his vision. As we all know, the original river in the song was not Ganga at all, but Luit, the raging, ferocious Red River that carves its tumultuous way through our valley. The only "male" river in India, it is truly the son the Brahma, Brahmaputra, in the ferocity of its power as well as in the all-pervasiveness of its influence over the lives of the people who live here. But the Luit of his song is Burha (old), perhaps with waning powers, impotent as it flows nisobde, nirobey, (quietly) down, even as battles rage on its banks, and injustice piled on injustice breaks the backs of the less privileged. Is the river weary of, or merely indifferent to, the mayhem taking place on its banks? When the song was translated first into Bengali, then later into Hindi, the need to match the universality of the sentiments of the song made the transference of the river, from Luit to Ganga, an imperative. For it is Ganga, not the Brahmaputra, which is the quintessentially "Indian" river.

Bhupen Hazarika's song left an impact into everyone's heart. Who hasn't been moved by Dil Hum Hum as it was sung in Rudali? The masterly transcription of that song was given the recognition that it merited. The original Buku Hom

Hom has been printed into the psyche of the Assamese people. It is heartening that the time and the voice are now part of the repertoire of unforgettable melodies that together make up the collective musical consciousness of a nation. Actually, we have always been so enamored of the Voice and the totality of the Song that sometimes we tend to forget the astonishing beauty of so many of Bhupen Hazarika's lyrics.

The songs themselves portray a variety of themes. There are the love-songs, which embody mostly a young man's passions. There are the charming songs of nature, as seen in this valley with its astonishingly beautiful flowers, landscapes and its dominating riverine scenery. These songs give many of us an insight into our own surroundings, which is something that only a poet of the highest caliber is ever successful at. The revolutionary songs gives us power to fight against the devil and the human interest songs compel us to think for a while about the deprived, weak and poor.

If the whole nation is today humming "Ganga", one remembers a time when one's parents did the same, way back in the sixties and early seventies. Indeed, tunes such as Sagor Songmot, Akasi Gonga, Natun Nagini Tumi and so on are an integral part of that era.

Without question, the Assamese today are proud of his achievements. Yet they seem slightly bemused, as well. That "one of us" has actually achieved such stature that, too, through this music that we have been humming for years, seems rather unbelievable to many. Assam is no doubt proud of him, but in rather a low-key sort of a way. Why, one wonders, is that?

Actually, Bhupen Hazarika, in spite of being the great artist that he is, has always been extremely accessible, especially to the people of his home state. His stage performances are punctuated by chatty aside which has the audience eating out of his hand, making them feel that they are sharing some part of his life. Indeed, the way he is usually addressed, "Bhupenda" shows the affection that people hold him in, as well as his own unassuming ways. Taking all these into consideration the researcher finally come to the point of conclusion that Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's song has a deep impact on every step of Assamese society.

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